

## In This Issue

EVELYN S. RAWSKI's presidential address assesses current formulations regarding the significance of the Qing period in Chinese history. Using Ho Ping-ti's state-of-Qing-historiography piece of 1967 (*JAS*, 26, 2) as a point of departure, she measures the advances made by recent work which has benefited from improved access to new sources in Chinese and in Manchu, branched out into new topics and themes, concentrated on earlier moments of this period, and shifted attention to the peripheries of the Qing Empire. A notable outcome of the new scholarship is the rejection of the sinicization thesis and its Han-centered orientation in favor of an empire-building model that emphasizes the importance of the Chinese Empire's "cultural links with the non-Han Peoples of Inner Asia" and the distinctions between "the administration of the non-Han regions from the administration of the former Ming provinces." What implications the new findings have for ongoing debates about the Chinese nation and Chinese nationalism are also broached here.

PHILLIP B. WAGONER challenges the enduring stereotype of the Vijayanagara empire of early modern South India as "a Hindu state" that preserved itself in the face of a growing Islamic presence in the subcontinent. Through a careful consideration of both visual and textual evidence, he shows that the culture of Vijayanagara was deeply influenced by its interaction with Islamic culture. He focuses particularly on secular culture, specifically men's court dress—the long tunic called *kabāyi* and the conical cap known as the *kullayi*—which he demonstrates was altered by "Islamic-inspired forms and practices." By adopting modes of dress and titles, he argues, Vijayanagara's rulers opted to present themselves as "Sultans among Hindu Kings," a choice that enabled them to participate in the wider world of "Islamicate" political culture even as they retained much of their own culture and remained beyond the pale of Muslim political control. The author proposes a theoretical model of Islamicization to account for changes that occur in cultural and material forms and practices, but not in religious doctrines and practices, a model that fuses together the "Islamicate" idea of Marshall Hodgson and the "Sanskritization" concept of M. N. Srinivas.

GERALD FIGAL delineates the political and social context out of which the phenomenon of *jibunshi* or "self-history" emerged in postwar Japan. He traces its origin back to the grass-roots "Everyday Writing Movement" (*Fudangi undo*) headed by Hashimoto Yoshio which encouraged local housewives to write their life stories. The aim of these stories—and of the meetings of local writers that were convened to discuss them—was to promote a new culture of egalitarianism and solidarity that opposed the autocratic nationalism of the prewar period. The self-histories, furthermore, were intended to be the stories of and by ordinary people, and written in an everyday language that avoided the elitist vocabulary of professional historians. The possibilities of this "radical" historiography were never fully realized, however. Although an alternative historiography has emerged in some writings, *jibunshi*-writing has increasingly become homogenized and commodified, a tendency that the author locates "within the mass reproduction of history and culture in a late capitalist society such as Japan's."

MICHAEL AUNG-THWIN challenges the widely held notion that the Ava period was a Shan era in the history of Burma. He attributes this erroneous assumption to

colonial historians who repeatedly misread the sources because of their reification of ethnicity and their unconscious prejudice towards this period. As a result, the three famous ministers of the Pagan Court of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and their descendants who established the Ava Dynasty in the late fourteenth century emerged in the colonial literature tagged as ethnic Shan, thus establishing the foundations of the myth of the “Three Shan Brothers.” By reexamining indigenous sources and reevaluating the colonial writings that generated this myth, the author finds that there was no contemporary basis for identifying the three ministers as Shan; nor was the Ava period particularly characterized by disorder and fragmentation. Yet these myths gained currency and have greatly colored subsequent interpretations of Burmese history.

SHU-MEI SHIH argues that Chinese colonial modernity should be understood as an instance of “semicolonialism.” She develops this argument through a close reading of the work of Liu Na’ou, a writer of Taiwanese and Japanese descent who was partly educated in Japan, lived in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, and founded a modernist literary movement called new sensationism. Liu’s writings, she explains, drew on both Franco-Japanese literary sources and Hollywood images to paint a portrait of a “Westernized ‘modern girl’ as a desirable embodiment of antipatriarchal, autonomous, urban, and hybrid modernity” and not as an “object of repudiation.” A product of the cosmopolitan urban setting of Shanghai and its semicolonial politics of race and gender, the modern girl, as represented in Liu’s work, possessed an “excessive materiality” that exemplifies the differences between Chinese semicolonialism and colonial modernities elsewhere. Thus, the author’s findings interrogate and problematize postcolonial paradigms of race and gender politics and readings of the projects of modernity that emphasize homogenous reactions to colonization.